

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

September 11, 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR:

FROM: P - Edmond L. Taylor

SUBJECT: Escape of East German Youth

1. After receipt of the State cable from Bonn of July 25th raising the issue of how to treat the increased escape of draft-age youth from East Germany, cables were sent by Defense and CIA to their field stations requesting further information. Answers to these queries have been received in addition to State cables from Berlin and Bonn.

2. The number of escapees entering West Berlin has ranged from 1,070 per day in July to 390 per day in August. Approximately 20 percent of these are males between the ages of 17 and 24 inclusive. Since late July approximately 900 per week are being flown to the Federal Republic due to overcrowding in Berlin. Other than the minimum of care to prevent acute suffering given by the West German authorities and private agencies to all refugees who are accepted, no special provision has been made for these escapees.

3. Psychological Impact

a. Favorable Elements:

The struggle of German youth to escape impressment into a communist army is a spontaneous demonstration of opposition to the Soviet system which has an important psychological impact on both sides of the iron curtain. Escape is one of the best means of stimulating disaffection in the oppressed homeland because the departed individual is a symbol to the community. Family, friends, youth leaders, and military commanders are held responsible for this "crime." Permanent stigma is placed upon them which requires more effort on the part of the surveillance apparatus. Claiming to be supported by youth, the communist movement is dealt a severe blow by the defection of these young people. Failure to provide for these escapees would create a situation psychologically unfavorable to the free world. These aspects of the situation were carefully analyzed and given considerable emphasis in the cable from the Eastern Affairs Division of HICOG in Berlin (BN-436, 15 August 1952).

b. Unfavorable Elements:

The High Commissioner stated in his cable, among other things, that it might be difficult to explain the implied discrimination against

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older people by a selective appeal to youth. At least in West Germany, it might be interpreted as writing off the Soviet Zone for a long time to come. The Socialist Party East Bureau takes the line that German youth can impede armament and form a corps of potential resistance in East Germany, but experience indicates that most of them will become obedient soldiers after exposure to German discipline and communist indoctrination if they are inducted.

4. Material Considerations

a. The Problem of Employment:

Escapees are presumably available for service in the West German Army on the same basis as West German youth and will be inducted at the same time. Since final arrangements for the military force of the Federal Republic have not been completed, it cannot absorb these escapees now. Induction of escapees on the same basis as West Germans when recruiting begins would have little effect on the flow of escapees. As an interim measure it has been suggested that the German government expand existing educational programs, introduce a voluntary youth labor service, or expand housing construction programs. HICOG pointed out that most suggestions for rapid absorption would require much longer than the critical three to six months to get underway and expressed doubt as to the practicality of other measures (unnumbered cable from Bonn, 29 August 1952).

b. Position of West German Government:

While it was reported earlier that certain Federal Republic cabinet members favored an appeal to East German youth to escape, recent conversations between HICOG and German officials, and releases to the press in Germany indicate a negative attitude toward increasing the flow of refugees. Cables indicate that the West German government is planning to seek a loan from the U. S. to care for refugees, but it is not known whether the problem of youthful escapees will figure in this request.

5. Questions Remaining to be Answered

- a. Is it feasible to encourage the escape of youth selectively without encouraging general defection?
- b. Could the Federal Republic be induced to set up a program to employ these people?
- c. What support would the Federal Republic expect from the United States?

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- d. Considering present U. S. policy, which in general holds that German refugees are a West German problem, what support will the U. S. in fact give the Federal Republic?

6. Conclusion

Recognizing that there are some psychological liabilities in such a program, it appears on balance that it is psychologically highly desirable for West Germany to encourage the escape of East German draft-age youth and provide for their employment. In the absence of answers to the questions set forth above, it is not possible to weigh the psychological advantage against the practical obstacles to the development of such a program. Exploitation of this psychological potential is so important to the achievement of U. S. objectives that it justifies sending a senior officer to Europe on behalf of the Board to make an intensive study of all possibilities for overcoming the material difficulties.

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